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ABSTRACT

A set of principles that focus on issues concerning implementation of a successful dropout prevention program is presented by a consortium of national educational organizations. The key elements of this "blueprint" consider local adaptations and effective results among various programs. The booklet discusses seven principles for dropout prevention, applies the blueprint for building a program, gives a scenario of a restructured school, presents letters from national organizations collaborating for dropout prevention, and lists local school collaborators and programs for information exchange. The seven principles for dropout prevention are the following: (1) "Believing the impossible possible" refers to the need for a clear vision about goals; (2) "Restoring a human-centered base" suggests that close and workable relationships be formed with students, parents, and community; (3) "Interactive intersections" refers to collaborative mechanisms, planning, and provision of collaborative services; (4) "The only axis" means that education should be student-centered, including personalized programs and instruction; (5) "Local traffic only" recommends that decision making should occur closest to the action--at the school building level; (6) "Empowering all to help" suggests that training should be implemented for both school and community; and (7) "Mine and ours" demonstrates that empowerment of collaborators and students results from a sense of ownership of their dropout prevention program. (CJH)

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A BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS

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COLLABORATING WITH NFIE FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION

American Association for Counseling and Development
American Association of Community and Junior Colleges
American Association of School Administrators
The Committee for Economic Development
Council for Educational Development and Research
Council of Chief State School Officers
Education Commission of the States
National Alliance of Business
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Boards of Education
National Congress of Parents and Teachers (National PTA)
National Education Association
National School Boards Association
National School Public Relations Association
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

DESIGN ELEMENTS

	PAGE
Drawing *A Blueprint for Success*	2
PRINCIPLES FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION	
1: Believing the Impossible Possible	7
2: Restoring a Human-Centered Base	9
3: Interactive Intersections	11
4: The Only Axis	15
5: Local Traffic Only	19
6: Empowering All to Help	23
7: Mine and Ours	25
Using the Blueprint—Building a Program	27
Scenario of a Restructured School	29
National Organizations Collaborating for Dropout Prevention	30
Individual Collaborators	35
Programs Presented at Information Exchanges	37

DRAWING A BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS

WE have a national crisis — at least a million of our students are dropping out of school or are at risk of dropping out each year. Bringing this crisis under control is the shared responsibility of all of us.

Our society is complex and constantly changing, while our educational system remains relatively unchanged. An educational system that lags behind society cannot have the value that it once had when it reflected society.

The complex society forces response from the student, static education does not. Getting an education in order to function productively in society is all too often put on hold or dropped.

Neither the educators nor any other group in our society can resolve the dropout crisis by themselves because there is no one reason why students drop out. The causes are complex and interrelated.

We see many symptoms of society's demands as students drop out of school. Academic failure, pregnancy, substance abuse, criminal behavior, unemployment, low self-esteem, alienation, getting a job to meet immediate economic needs, and even boredom are such symptoms, almost always occurring in combination. These problems coupled with an unresponsive, static educational system lead a student to decide that dropping out of school is the best if not the only option.

In the short term, this option may remove some of the immediate pressures. But in the long run dropping out most often results in painful loss of self-direction for the individual, a staggering social and financial burden to the community, and a fundamental weakening of the strength of our nation.

The devastating results of such massive numbers of our youth dropping out of school extend to all of us. Visionary leadership by educators, business leaders, community organizations, and government is required. All of us must become student advocates to make our schools more responsive to students' needs and to help our students deal successfully with the pressures and become productive members of society. There are no simple solutions. We must all work together. We have no alternative.

How do we do it? Reflecting our society, we are so specialized that we are accustomed to addressing parts, not the whole. We must reinvest our energy collectively to bring the parts together, to find coherence. We must break down turf barriers, communicate, even become selfless if we are to effectively address the complexities of the problems and resolve the crisis. We must challenge ourselves and each other.

The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) accepted a challenge from the National Education Association (NEA) to begin a collaborative process at the national level that would enhance collaboration at the local level, where the action must be focused. With $1,700,000 from the NEA for dropout prevention and related programs — teachers' own money — NFIE developed Operation Rescue in a dual approach for dropout prevention: listening, then acting.

LISTENING —

NFIE went into communities, to the grass roots level. National organizations representing various constituencies joined NFIE in listening. We listened — to students who had dropped out and reentered, directors of dropout prevention programs, teachers, principals, local and state superintendents, local and state board of education members, counselors, social workers, cultural council members, parents, researchers, business leaders, local government representatives, criminal justice personnel, and other support services.

We listened in April and May, 1986, at local Information Exchanges, hosted by NEA local affiliates — in Denver, Colorado; Los Angeles, California; Louisville, Kentucky; and Bridgeport, Connecticut. These sites were selected for maximum demographic and programmatic diversity. We sought information about successful components of dropout prevention programs, barriers to success with effective strategies to overcome them, and lessons learned from experience that would be helpful to others developing new programs.

We learned what was working for dropouts and at-risk students in a wide range of programs:

- Alternative programs in school and out of school
- Vocational education programs
- Alternative schools
- Schools within schools
- Early childhood education programs
- Corrections programs
- Supplementary education programs
- Summer work programs
- Migrant education programs
- Substance abuse programs
- Teenage pregnancy and parenting programs
- Districtwide programs
- Statewide programs

NFIE and representatives of the collaborating national organizations shared with each other what was learned, at the Operation Rescue National Information Exchange in Washington, D.C., May 30, 1986. **A Blueprint for Success** is the result of all these Information Exchanges.

This document is a set of principles that bring focus to issues, attitudes, and concerns essential for planning and implementing a successful dropout prevention program. It has been developed from the experiences of many people, often expressed in their own words, and even with some repetition to reflect different people's individual perspectives. The blueprint has been written for a wide variety of readers — for teachers, certainly, but also for all the others collaborating to help students complete their education and to bring our dropout crisis under control. Because the responsibility for this monumental task is shared by all of us, the blueprint is written for all of us.

The blueprint provides the key elements. It cannot provide the step-by-step implementation activities because they must be developed by local leaders in relation to the differing realities of their communities. Such local tailoring is essential for the educational system to provide quality education in harmony with the needs of the community. Then and only then will all students have the opportunity to realize their potential.

ACTING —

NFIE's second approach is to facilitate action through a grants program at the local level and the collaboration of national organizations.

Through funding provided by the NEA, NFIE created the Operation Rescue competitive grants program, which funds local NEA affiliates for collaborative action in effective dropout prevention at the local school building level. Grants of up to $50,000 for up to two years are provided.

These grants implement the principles in the blueprint. They fund the planning and implementation of new programs, the augmentation of existing programs with stronger educational components, and the dissemination and replication of successful programs. They emphasize a combination of education, work experience, and support services. A major priority is for programs to demonstrate the ability to build collaborative community support for program needs assessment, planning, development, implementation, evaluation, and funding.

To complement the grants program, NFIE is orchestrating the collaborative action of numerous organizations at the national level. Each national organization is working on its own action plan appropriate to its constituency, and at the same time is working with other organizations in carefully targeted areas requiring collaboration. We are all working together to support the implementation of the principles of **A Blueprint for Success.**

THE CHALLENGE —

Through ***listening*** we know that we don't have to reinvent the wheel. We must use what we know. We know that the principles of the blueprint are the precepts, the components that must go into any program for students at risk. We know strategies to identify who the at-risk students are, to know why they drop out, and to help them stay in school and complete their education. We know the extent of leadership and collaboration required — resources and people — for comprehensive, coherent dropout prevention programs that work. In ***acting,*** we know that as we change our educational system to meet the needs of at-risk students, we are also changing that system for all students and making it responsive to the growth of the total society.

Our mission is to empower young people through education to realize their potential and lead independent, self-directed lives. As student advocates, all of us together can make a difference. We cannot abandon our youth and our future.

Donna C. Rhodes

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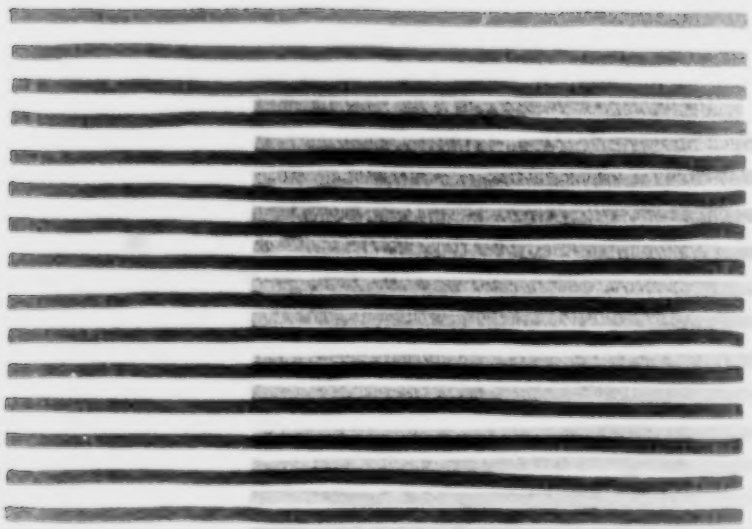

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BELIEVING THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE

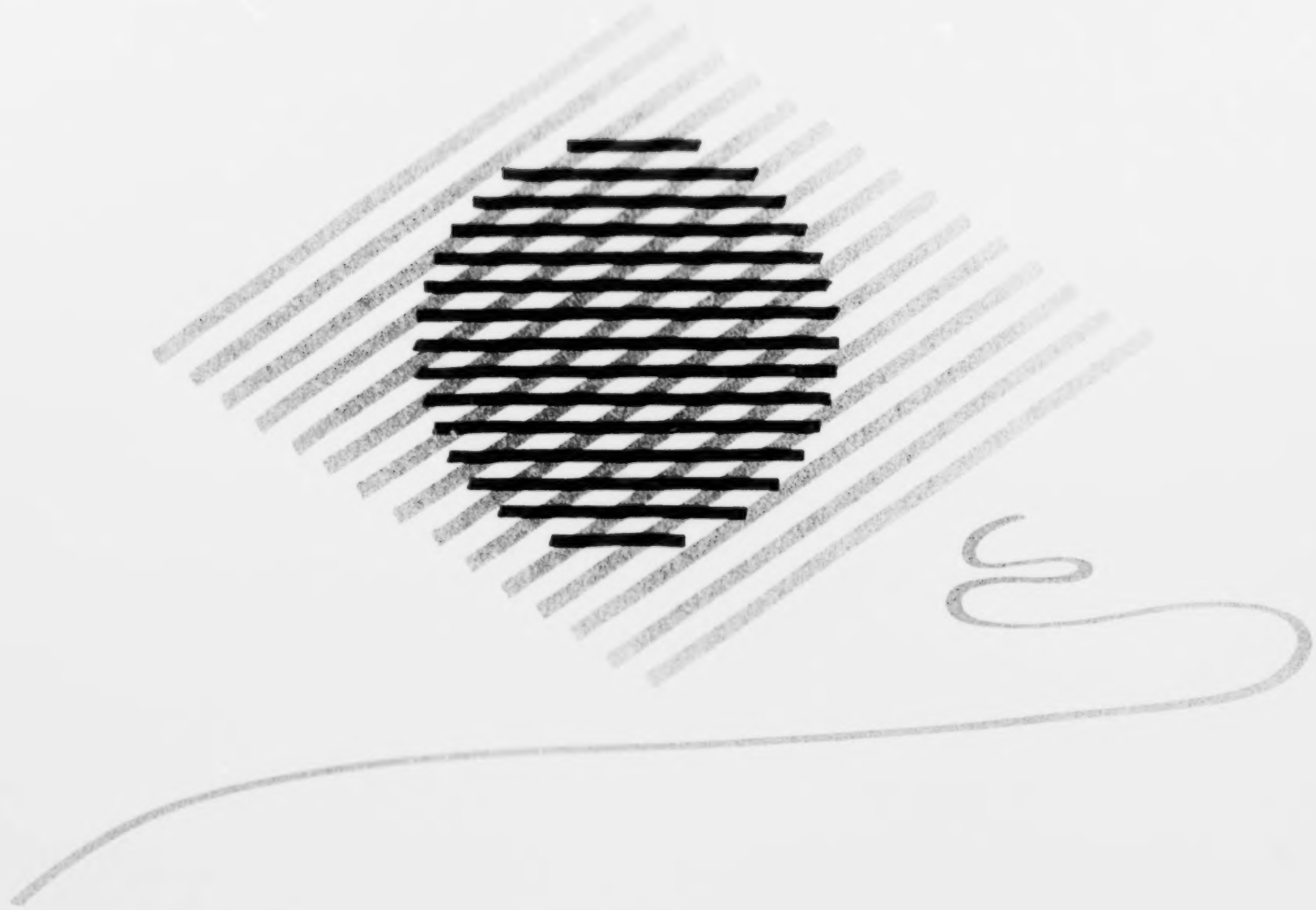
A clearly articulated VISION is the beginning for an effective dropout prevention program.

Committed, creative leadership is needed that enables the belief in the impossible, the taking of risks, the chancing of failure, the unrelenting persistence to begin again and keep trying with different approaches until we succeed.

Society's institutions, including education, must expand their capabilities of empowering all students to lead productive and fulfilling lives. As a human invention brought about by change, the educational institution must continue to change to fulfill its mission to the changing society.

We Listened, and We Heard —

- Admit that we have a problem.
- Believe that we can make a difference.
- Know what we want to do and make it happen.
- Act as visionary leaders—remove current barriers to realizing what is possible.
- Convey the vision to the students to instill hope for the future.
- Set a standard of excellence as a goal.
- Develop alternative solutions; keep trying alternative approaches—don't give up.
- Take risks—don't censor yourself.
- Have the courage to ask, believe the impossible, make a fool of yourself, chance failure, keep on trying, keep on learning.



RESTORING A HUMAN-CENTERED BASE

The human connection is all important as a prerequisite for success in meeting the needs of those students who are at risk of dropping out of school. Educational success involves people meeting people, personal caring, trusting, patience, a supportive school climate. Human-centered education requires the interaction of people understanding and supporting each other.

A ONE-ON-ONE RELATIONSHIP

In successful programs, educators and persons providing supportive services demonstrate an understanding of the individual student's culture and know the individual student in a one-on-one relationship. This demands an awareness and understanding of a student's background, family, economic condition, social situation, cultural identification, and other significant factors relating to the person's individual identity.

And We Heard —

- Establish a human connection with the student — care.
- Know students as people, and let them know us as people.
- Help the at-risk student negotiate the system.
- Provide each student with an opportunity to develop a positive relationship with an adult; try an adopt-a-student program.
- Make students feel wanted, help them care for someone else.
- Develop a trusting relationship, not a control relationship.
- Understand and accept the uniqueness of the student's culture.
- Work from that understanding to motivate the student.
- Know the language of the student.
- Challenge the tendency to predict a student's future in relation to racial and ethnic biases.
- Accept secondary students as adults.
- Be accessible.

PARENTS AS ALLIES

Parents and significant others can be the most valuable allies of all in support of their children's educational success by forming and maintaining the linkage between home and school.

And We Heard —

- Convey respect when reaching out to parents.
- Expect that parents' contributions will be valuable.
- Provide realistic opportunities for parents to get involved.
- Understand and accept the family's culture.
- Be creative in overcoming the tough resistance of some parents to become involved — parents need personal contact.
- Communicate regularly so that home and school expectations can be consistent.
- Use parents as an early warning system.

THE SCHOOL AS FRIEND

Through personal relationships between the student and school personnel, the school can become a friend. School needs to be perceived in relation to people rather than as a cold, isolated building. The school then becomes human — a symbol of the teacher advisers, counselors, advocates for students.

And We Heard —

- Communicate with words, actions, and empathy.
- Listen.
- Make no false promises.
- Commit to educating at-risk students; stop the name calling — "we have the throwaways."
- Maintain honest communications between students and faculty.
- Understand the demographics of the student population in the school building.
- Understand the school culture and build upon it.
- Make school a warm, safe, positive experience for students.

THE COMMUNITY AS A CARING BODY

People representing larger groups, agencies, and organizations, as part of the total community culture, must form a human-centered support base to solve the dropout problem. This may involve groups working together who ordinarily do not work together and may require skills in coalition building.

And We Heard —

- Join together to provide comprehensive assistance.
- Involve community leaders as volunteers.
- Accept that it's a shared responsibility to educate all students.
- Break down the myth that connections are with agencies — they are with people.
- Understand the history and the culture of the community, and link it to the student.
- Let the community demonstrate its caring for its students.

INTERACTIVE INTERSECTIONS

Collaboration is required to provide total and comprehensive services to the total person. Neither the educators nor the community nor the family can do what is necessary alone. We all need to work together for the individual student's achievement and growth.

GETTING TOGETHER AS A TEAM

The complexity of the at-risk problem requires a comprehensive team effort — parents, teachers, counselors, principals, school board members, school superintendent, education support personnel, business and industry leaders, social workers, staff and volunteers of community service organizations, cultural council representatives, local foundation executives, local government officials, child protection teams, nurses, doctors and other medical personnel, lawyers, law enforcement officials, corrections officers, judges, psychologists, leaders of special programs, representatives of public and private agencies, and others.

And We Heard —

- Know what you are asking for in collaboration; be prepared to give in return.
- Interact with the key people in the student's world who can provide support to the student and to the student's family.
- Communicate continuously as team members.
- Use support service staff for case management to ensure ongoing collaboration among home, school, and community.
- Tap existing or ad hoc groups for innovative approaches to support services.
- Involve people and agencies on the team who are not used to working together.
- Break down barriers — turf or specialization.
- Share responsibility for coordinated decision making and action.
- Develop formal contracts when useful, but rely on informal contracts for commitment and action.

IN SEARCH OF COLLABORATORS

For people to work together successfully, special qualities are essential, especially when individuals have never worked together before.

And We Heard —

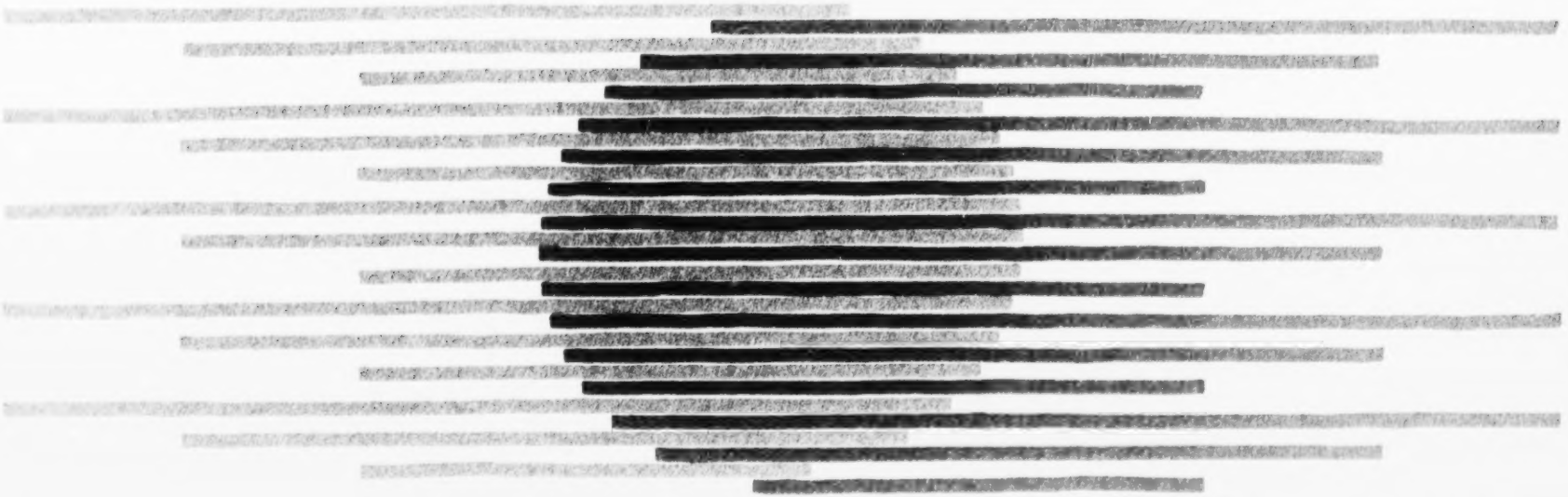
- Choose collaborators for their ability and desire to participate, not necessarily for their seniority.
- Find caring people to teach students and then the curriculum.
- Find people who see failure as a source of information rather than as a cause for punishment.
- Act, in collaboration, as an opener of doors, a developer of talent, a trainer, a coach, a sponsor, a positive role model, a mentor.
- Define the teacher's role as an adviser who teaches.
- Be impatient with our failure.
- Be willing to make mistakes.
- Be enthusiastic, with a high level of energy.
- Talk positively about students.
- Expect students to accept responsibility and achieve.
- See problems as challenges.

COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

Planning for all levels of service and activity must be thorough and collaborative. Plan for the development of policies, procedures, rules, and legislation that is needed.

And We Heard —

- Plan the program to treat the problem, not just the symptoms.
- Plan the program to restructure the system as necessary to meet students' needs.
- Set up advisory groups, involve the community, and listen.
- Find out what the community wants its graduates to be able to do.



- Gather information from dropouts about why the system didn't work for them.
- Assess the need for dropout prevention in relation to the total community.
- Plan carefully to coordinate education, work experience, and support services.
- Plan for a united front of organizations, the community, educators, and parents for legislative action for at-risk students.
- Collaborate to achieve federal, state, and local commitments to work on the dropout problem.
- Develop an evaluation plan that makes all collaborators accountable for the program.

COLLABORATIVE SERVICES AND FINANCING

Collaborators work daily in order to provide individualized, comprehensive services to students and families through resourceful financing.

And We Heard —

- Form clusters of teachers, management, community, and business to provide services.
- Perceive collaborators as adjunct faculty members working with the school.
- Develop service agreements and a feeder system between and among districts, as appropriate.
- Redirect funds that are already committed.
- Augment public funds with private funds.
- Increase sources of funding — be brokers for prevention, mental health services, community health programs, JTPA and employment training programs, HUD funds for buildings, etc.
- Combine people power with money power — get dollars committed.

THE ONLY AXIS

Student-centered education involves the uninvolved, reduces the risk of students' dropping out, and enables them to become productive in society. Our challenge is to move from a faceless, collective education to a primary focus on educating the individual student. The student, not the system, must become the center of our attention.

EARLY INTERVENTION

The sooner we can intervene with at-risk students, the better are our chances of success.

And We Heard —

- Invest in early childhood education—preschool or kindergarten; replicate successful early childhood programs.
- Begin at least in elementary school—high school is too late for too many.
- Build the relationship between work and education with elementary students.

STUDENT IDENTIFICATION

A variety of approaches to identify at-risk students is essential for early intervention to help in reducing the dropout rate.

And We Heard —

- Involve teachers as members of a team identifying students who are at risk.
- Look at the whole school population when identifying students who are at risk.
- Use objective data but don't be bound by it; beware of inaccurate data.
- Find creative ways to identify at-risk students — use subjective means.
- Look for the invisible dropouts — those whose imaginations have dropped out though their bodies are present.

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

Design the program to involve students in positive ways for self-development.

And We Heard —

- Enable students' self-image and self-esteem to grow.
- Allow students to choose their own advisers.
- Encourage students to provide their own answers.
- Help students feel needed.
- Help students grow emotionally and socially as well as academically.
- Develop positive peer culture to counteract negative street culture.
- Help students set and achieve realistic goals for themselves, so that they are accountable for their own growth and progress.
- Increase freedom and responsibility a little bit at a time.
- Make the connection between success in school and success in later life.

PERSONALIZED PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM

In a student-centered program, the design and the curriculum must meet the student's needs.

And We Heard —

- Enable teachers and students to design the curriculum — through time, support, resources, and regulations.
- Emphasize affective education in the program and in the curriculum.
- Develop a competency-based curriculum — rather than a conveyor belt program.
- Expand the curriculum beyond minimum competencies and basic skills to the full range of possibilities.
- Offer choices; make the curriculum meaningful to the student's reality — here and now.
- Help students see the uses of what they learn.
- Design curriculum and instruction to fit the individual learning style of the student. Recognize that students have different learning styles.
- Offer life planning in the curriculum.
- Allow for continuous progress and transition classes rather than retention.
- Allow students to set and achieve goals, sometimes formalized in a contract.
- Provide job training, part-time jobs, and other work experience — build resumes.
- Involve business in developing apprenticeship, internship, and other work experience programs.
- Merge work opportunities with the curriculum for total learning.
- Design a flexible schedule for those unable to attend school during usual school hours.
- Allow for year round open entry-open exit.
- Allow students to enter adult education at age 16.

PERSONALIZED INSTRUCTION

As the program and the curriculum need to be student-centered, the instructional approach to the student also must be personalized to meet the student's needs.

And We Heard —

- Personalize education — we're all different.
- Identify what motivates each student — job, sport, art, music, computer. Use it.
- Allow sufficient planning time for teachers individually and in teams.
- Emphasize teachers doing instructional tasks. Provide staff support for routine paper work and duties.
- Develop alternative instructional strategies to enable students to succeed and stay in school, when other strategies cease to work.
- Maintain a low student-adult ratio — 1:15 maximum. Small is good, large loses.
- Provide noncompetitive instruction; encourage cooperative group learning.
- Provide tutoring in the evenings and on weekends.
- Provide individualized instruction and multiple instructional groupings, varying in size in one room.
- Enable instruction to occur in multiple locations in each community.

Cluster collaborators in small units to work as a team, so students can feel they belong.

Use a multimedia instructional approach.

Evaluate student performance regularly.

Encourage self-pacing and self-evaluation by students.

PERSONALIZED SUPPORT SERVICES

As the program, curriculum, and instruction are student-centered and individualized, so must be student support services.

And We Heard —

Make personalized support services vital in educating the total person — including medical services, health education, social work services, psychological and counseling services, parenting, drug and alcohol abuse services.

Bring health services to the building, with off-site referrals only for specialized health problems.

Place a counselor in every elementary school, to handle people problems, not paper work and clerical tasks.

Provide crisis intervention counseling as needed, and group and individual counseling daily and weekly.

Offer peer counseling.

Provide child care services.

Provide parenting, motherhood, and fatherhood classes for teenage parents.

Provide training on parents' rights and responsibilities.

Develop parent support groups.

Work with dysfunctional families.

Visit regularly with students and their families in their homes.

Cooperate with alternative service agencies to solve family and other problems.

Provide necessary special education services.

Transport students to and from school, work, support services, and other out-of-school activities.

TRANSITIONS TO DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTS

Collaboration is needed to assist students in moving from one level, program, or school to another.

And We Heard —

Establish communication between the early childhood teacher and the elementary teacher as the at-risk child moves to the elementary level.

Establish communication between the elementary teacher and the secondary teacher as the at-risk student moves to the secondary level.

Provide summer academic and orientation programs to smooth students' transitions from elementary to middle to high school.

- Assist student and teachers if the student moves from an alternative to a mainstream program.
- Mainstream students only if the mainstream isn't polluted.
- Be sensitive to bilingual students' transition problems as they move into mainstream classes.
- Help students find jobs as they move from school to the adult world.
- Accommodate reentry.

LOCAL TRAFFIC ONLY

The classroom level is the essential focal point for effective dropout prevention programs, with local building management and total participation. Top-down programs and programs managed and delivered beyond a local school focus are diffuse, lack the human connections, and lack the personalized approach essential to motivate and meet the needs of at-risk students.

DECISION MAKING CLOSEST TO THE ACTION — AT THE GRASS ROOTS, SCHOOL BUILDING LEVEL

Collaborative decision making at the school building level is essential from design to delivery to accountability.

And We Heard —

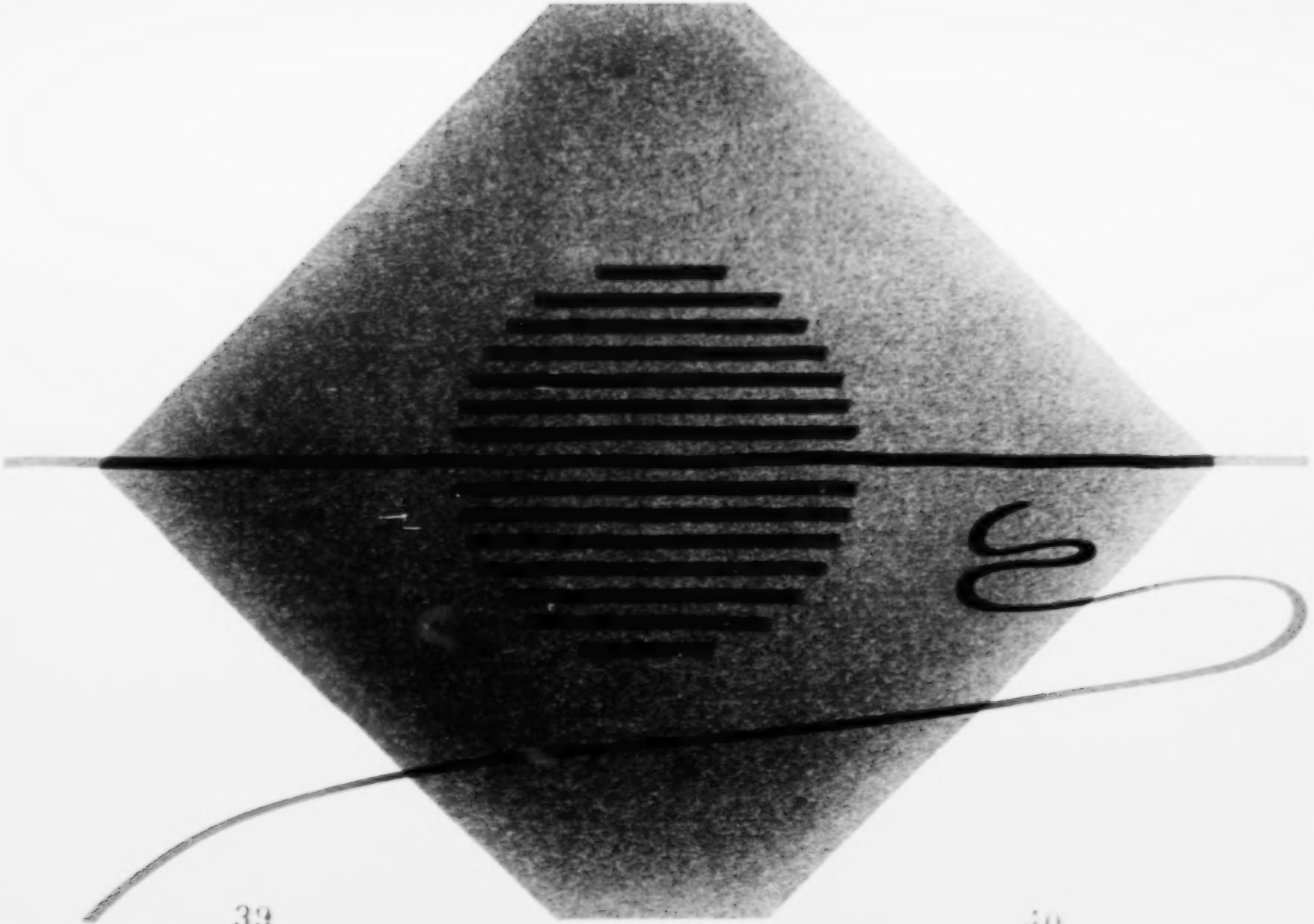
- Make decisions using data gathered locally; use local business and government planning data.
- Make decisions slowly and carefully — if it is worth doing, it will take time.
- Flatten the hierarchy — avoid top-down administrative overlay. Provide participatory decision making.
- Allow professionals to make decisions and to lead.
- Secure district and state support for local decision making by persons working with students.

ORCHESTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

The complexity of the problem and the involvement of many require management expertise in coordinating a variety of people and services in a different process than is usually found in a school. Delegating authority means shared leadership.

And We Heard —

- Encourage the leadership of others.
- Use a wide variety of management styles.
- Broker the collaboration between the school and the community.
- Maintain the big picture — get everyone involved.
- Balance the relationship between short- and long-range planning.
- Identify and remove barriers — work to change the system.
- Operate as an entrepreneur — apply appropriate business practices.
- Think from the perspectives of other collaborators.
- Match staff to need; the first decision may not be the last decision for the year.
- Maintain consistent and complete records at the local school building for the locally designed program.
- Provide administrative means to know whether the program is making a difference.



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- Be clear about expectations of students, parents, staff, community, and business leaders.
- Tend to the care and feeding of teachers — inservice, sabbaticals, well days.
- Secure political support from school board, city government, state legislature.
- Maintain effective public relations for business and community support.
- Foster an environment that encourages and rewards continuing growth of the staff.
- Create *esprit de corps*.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Creative approaches to financial management avoid duplication, waste, and unnecessary expenses, on the one hand, and help to provide adequate funding levels, on the other.

And We Heard —

- Employ creative techniques that cost little money.
- Reallocate existing funds.
- Use federal, state, and local support for different components of the program.
- Support the curriculum with necessary resources, time, and money.
- Provide innovative management to find new sources of funds.
- Coordinate financial management in a central school district office, and provide on-site financial management for the program at the school building level.
- Collaborate with local business leaders for assistance in financial planning and management.

RESTRUCTURING THE SCHOOL

A personalized, student-centered program requires much revamping of the school's delivery systems to make them appropriate for the complex society that now exists.

And We Heard —

- Question whether the student needs redirecting, or the system needs redirecting.
- Examine, as a team including students, the instructional system to see what needs to be changed, e.g., financial support, ways of fulfilling Carnegie units, promotion and retention policies, grading system.
- Build the program; then construct the building.
- Design the physical learning environment to fit the ages and needs of the students and the program.
- Facilitate instruction in multiple locations in the community.
- Break large schools into schools within schools.
- Provide flexible scheduling and shorten the school day as needed for students' personalized programs.
- Revamp administrative structures for more effective communication, involvement, and decision making.
- Reach out — make school less intimidating to parents and to the community.
- Develop an experiential curriculum that provides services to the community, e.g., horticulture, bakery, print shop, computer repairs — make the school a service center for the community.
- Use the total staff for student development — including custodians, secretaries, cafeteria workers, bus drivers.
- Provide appropriate scheduling for the involvement of the community in school activities.
- Create a vision of the school as broker of the many services needed by the student.

EMPOWERING ALL TO HELP

Training must be a whole school and community phenomenon. It involves all people working with students at risk — teachers, principals, counselors, community participants, business leaders, volunteers, parents, service providers, and other collaborators.

TRAINING FOR A STUDENT-CENTERED PROGRAM

Given the design of the program to meet complex needs of students, collaborators usually have to develop new skills. Thus, training becomes a necessity for all collaborators, not just the educators.

And We Heard —

- Provide ongoing training — daily and weekly throughout the program.
- Provide training longer than a one-day experience.
- Make training experiential, not theoretical; use on-the-job experiences.
- Train for a balance between teaching and advising, and content and process.
- Involve collaborators in cross-area training.
- Train collaborators to believe in themselves and their abilities to empower students.
- Provide training in learning how to identify at-risk students.
- Increase understanding of adolescent development and behavior so that collaborators can meet students' emotional, social, and medical needs.
- Teach collaborators how to identify and access needed support resources.
- Provide training on how to develop personalized curriculum and how to deliver personalized instruction.
- Train in experiential learning for students.
- Develop communications skills.
- Provide management training in new administrative structures, creative financing, flexible scheduling, multiple staffing, team decision making.
- Develop cultural sensitivity and awareness of at-risk demographics.
- Provide inservice training for certified teachers to direct and deliver instruction to poorly performing students.
- Stagger teacher training and individualize it as much as possible.
- Let teachers train each other.
- Train collaborators in multiple approaches to assessment.

TRAINING FOR COLLABORATION

All collaborators need heightened awareness and sharpened skills to fulfill their individual roles and work with each other in delivering effective and total services to at-risk students.

And We Heard —

- Provide staff development for everyone: teachers, principals, counselors, community and business representatives, parents, and other service providers.
- Establish frequent staff development days using specialized, appropriate local resource people for diversified training.
- Train collaborators in understanding multicultural perspectives.
- Allow sufficient time for planning of training and development activities.
- Provide training in changing attitudes, e.g., to win over the parent who says, "I didn't graduate; why should my child?"

MINE AND OURS

Empowerment of collaborators and students will result from their sense of ownership of their dropout prevention program. This ownership is created when values and skills are matched with needs and services. It empowers everyone to achieve the desired goal with students — enabling individuals to have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to meet the challenges they will face and the changing society will face in the future.

COLLABORATOR EMPOWERMENT

Those who believe in the program and feel empowered through training and involvement in decision making and delivery of services will have a strong sense of ownership and pride.

And We Heard —

- Give everyone a chance to invest in the school.
- Enable everyone to find fulfillment through giving what they know and do best.
- Facilitate action rather than just endorsement for ownership.
- Allow the program to be shaped and delivered by teachers, counselors, principals, parents, community and business representatives, and others working together.
- Know parents' expectations for their children and involve them in setting goals, in order to secure parents' full commitment to and ownership in the program.
- Negotiate the investment of local community and business leaders' time, knowledge, skills, and resources to achieve their ownership in the program.
- Energize for ownership.
- Own the program to empower students and ourselves for the future.

STUDENT EMPOWERMENT

Students can achieve self-direction and accountability for their lives through student-centered programs delivered effectively by capable, skilled, and dedicated staff.

And We Heard —

- See that all students succeed — that's our mission.
- Enable students to do their plan.
- Help students fulfill their potential.
- Help students learn to set and achieve attainable goals.
- Let students own their mistakes and support them in dealing with the consequences.
- Listen for the student to say, "I was finally heard."
- Listen for the student to say, "I've done it. I'm ready."

USING THE BLUEPRINT—BUILDING A PROGRAM

The problems are complex; the solutions are not simple. The solutions are known; they are not new; they must be put into action. They require restructuring the school. They require new approaches to staffing; they involve more people than those currently providing services to students. They require incorporating different strategies with different options. The experts and the answers are in the local community. Find them; use them.

Find the concerned leaders in the community — in all areas of specialization and activity. Sit down and talk with each other; listen to each other. Learn what the problems are. Listen to those who are working with students at risk; hold an Information Exchange. Form partnerships — real, working partnerships. Decide on the goals; develop the strategies. Find the resources — human and financial.

Use the blueprint as a guide; it contains all the principles and critical elements needed. Build a program; take action.

A RESTRUCTURED SCHOOL

Stacey arrives at school at noon for five hours of classes after working at a part-time apprenticeship in carpentry provided through a cooperative arrangement between the school district and the union. Transportation from the work site to school is provided by local businesses in collaboration with the school.

Stacey attends classes in social studies, English, mathematics, science, and an elective — the curriculum having been designed by teachers. There is emphasis on basic skills, with progression into higher level study in each course. Like other students, Stacey moves from one segment of a course to another upon attaining mastery of the material. All students work at their own pace to complete diploma requirements. Students are grouped into study units of up to 10 students each, according to their focus on particular segments of courses. Three such groups can work simultaneously in a classroom, in which students at different levels of mastery in a subject share a teacher and an aide. With ten computers in the classroom, one of the three study units can be assigned to work on the computers while the other students are working with the teacher or the aide, according to the teacher's planning and direction.

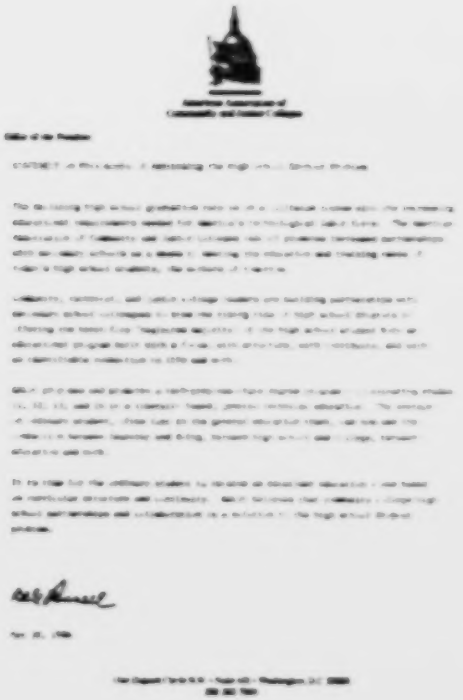
Today with nine other students Stacey will have a group meeting with the school counselor to work on life planning skills and discuss problems and concerns related to school, home, jobs, and family. The counselor, with a total of 100 students to serve and track, and with administrative support from the school office, will meet individually with Stacey tomorrow at a regularly scheduled appointment. The counselor and the teachers are also available at other times as needed for students and for parents. Stacey is also helped by other services brought to the school, such as medical care, parole officer, child care, a job bank, etc.

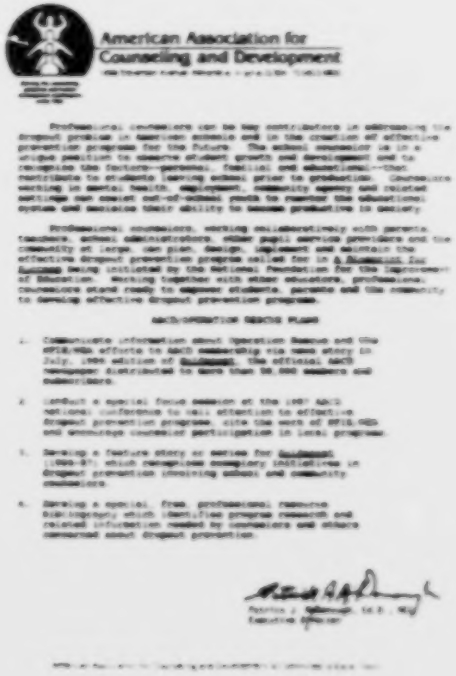
Classes are not always conducted in the school building. Stacey's geometry teacher has provided an individual practicum at the work site where Stacey is in the apprenticeship program. It is designed for practical application of the geometry content of the course.

Having begun the ninth grade somewhat behind and somewhat older than other students, Stacey has now caught up and is ahead of grade in social studies and mathematics as a result of a strong sense of belonging and connection through self-pacing of the curriculum and the attention and encouragement of counselor and teachers. If this progress continues, Stacey may graduate six months ahead of schedule and move into full-time employment following the apprenticeship.

The school began its restructured approach for individualized, self-paced education for at-risk students and dropouts like Stacey. However, in the realization that all students need that kind of approach, the entire school has been restructured and all students have the same opportunity and support to meet their individual needs.

COLLABORATING FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION





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STATEMENT OF THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS
AND THE
NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION ON EDUCATION SERVICE

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is deeply concerned about youngsters who fail to complete their education and drop out of school. It is incumbent upon educators at all levels of our nation's education system, together with other providers of social services, the business community, and interested citizens to address this issue aggressively. This will involve collection of accurate data on school leavers; careful study of the complex causes of dropping out; the testing of potential models to prevent dropping out through demonstration programs; and the dissemination, replication, and funding of successful dropout prevention models. The "Operation Rescue" project of the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education and the National Education Association is an important initiative in beginning this work.

The CCSSO has undertaken two initiatives on the dropout issue and is awaiting funding for additional efforts.

Dropout Data Project

Definitions of dropouts vary from state to state and from district to district within states. Currently collected dropout data, when available, are not reliable. To achieve comparability, two goals need to be accomplished. First, states must agree upon the best measure(s) of dropout rates. Second, collection and reporting of the accepted statistic(s) must be standardized so that comparisons are correct.

Prevention Project on School Dropout Prevention and Employment for Disadvantaged Youth

The CCSSO Resource Center on Educational Equity has received a portion of a planning grant to enable four national organizations to plan a project on school dropout prevention and employment for disadvantaged youth. The CCSSO, the National Governors Association, the Committee for Economic Development, and the National Conference of State Legislatures. The planning grant will be used to identify and select several states where the governor, legislative leaders, chief state school officer, and business leaders are interested in and committed to enacting innovative state policy for dropout prevention and employment preparation of disadvantaged school youth. If selected for an implementation grant, each state would receive a $40,000 matching grant and technical assistance from the four national organizations. States would develop coordinated state policy that could result in reallocation of existing state and local resources to implement innovative projects for at-risk, in-school youth.

We view these efforts as being supportive of and supplemental to the excellent activities begun by NFIE under its "Operation Rescue" program.

William Hunter

Education
[illegible]
AMERICA

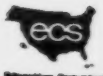
COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH

Statement Prepared for Operation Rescue
by the Council for Educational Development and Research

Research confirms that the principles in A Blueprint for Reform are vital components of an effective school dropout program. For example, from research on those that attend schools, with low student-adult ratios, increased student-adult interaction, participation in career-experience activities, and coordination with school PTA. We know that tailoring curriculum, instruction, and support services to individual student aptitudes and interest promotes academic success and low dropout rates, one of the most common causes of students leaving school. Research also tells us that schools with clear and consistent rules governing social behavior, high expectations of achievement for both students and staff, and rewards systems that encourage both achievement are effective in motivating students and preventing their withdrawal to school.

Our knowledge of the problems points the way to finding solutions. We need to shift priorities, find resources, and motivate the energy to implement approaches that have proven to be effective in keeping young people in school. To this end, the nine regional educational laboratories are proposing to use a significant portion of their funding next year to carry out a nationwide program dealing specifically with youth "at-risk." This effort will give schools and other agencies, including projects such as Operation Rescue, needed information and necessary training assistance. With this help, schools and communities can apply the best emerging research to their own situations and needs.



Education Commission
of the
States
Hall of the States
444 North Capitol Street, N.W.
Suite 349
Washington, D.C. 20001

This nation has been in the midst of a major education reform movement for the last several years. While ECS approves with both the spirit and the composite of reforms, we also recognize that all the reforms in the world cannot help young people who are not in school. We must now move to meet the needs of those who, despite or because of school reform, are at greater risk of being lost to society as productive individuals. Because of this ECS supports wholeheartedly the principles emerging from the report section of "Information Exchanges" on programs serving potential school dropouts. We applaud the efforts of the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education in expanding our collective knowledge about these efforts.

These principles, creating a clear vision for schools and students -- fostering collaboration among schools, social service agencies and other youth serving organizations, early identification of student needs, stronger and more effective management at the school level, new training for teachers and administrators and building a new sense of ownership in creating opportunities for success -- are all fundamental to improving the "life chances" for our young people.

ECS believes these principles raise a number of challenges for state and local education policy makers. For instance:

- The lack of good information, particularly at the state level, about the at-risk population hinders effective action for these youth. We must change the incentive structure to encourage the collection of accurate and more useful statistics about the problem.
- Too little is known about working solutions. We must learn more about the human and physical resources required to sustain efforts and especially about the policy environments in which they operate.
- Confusion and disagreement about what schools can or should do for disadvantaged or troubled young people vis a vis other youth-serving agencies makes coordination all the more difficult to achieve. Special efforts must be made to create environments in which collaborative arrangements can thrive.

Our organizational effort over the next two years will be to address each of these challenges, and we look forward to working with NFIE and other organizations to this end.

Sincerely,

Frank Newman
Frank Newman
President

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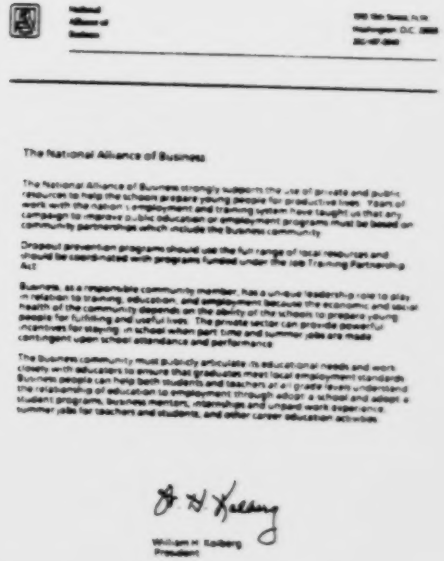


The National Alliance of Business

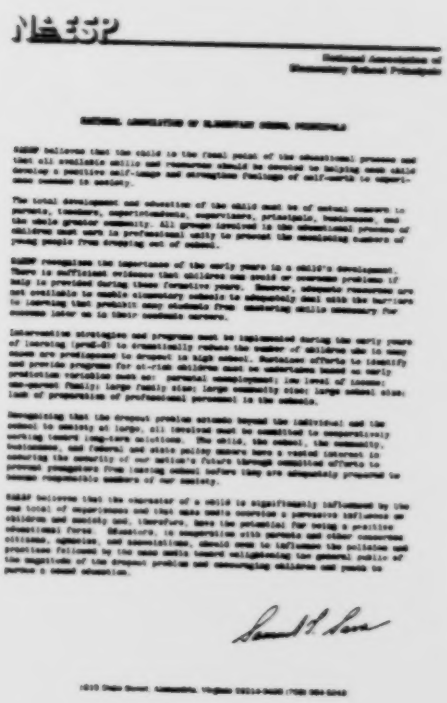
The National Alliance of Business strongly supports the use of private and public resources to help the schools prepare young people for productive lives. Part of work with the nation's employment and training system have taught us that any campaign to improve public education or employment programs must be based on community partnerships which include the business community.

Dropout prevention programs should use the full range of local resources and should be coordinated with programs funded under the Job Training Partnership Act.

Business, as a responsible community member, has a unique leadership role to play in relation to training, education, and employment because the economic and social health of the community depends on the ability of the schools to prepare young people for fulfilling and useful lives. The private sector can provide powerful incentives for staying in school when part time and summer jobs are made contingent upon school attendance and performance.

The business community must publicly articulate its educational needs and work closely with educators to ensure that graduates meet local employment standards. Business people can help both students and teachers at all grade levels understand the relationship of education to employment through adopt a school and adopt a student programs, business mentors, internships and unpaid work experience, summer jobs for teachers and students, and other career education activities.

William H. Kolberg
President



NAESP

National Association of Elementary School Principals

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

NAESP believes that the child is the focal point of the educational process and that all available skills and resources should be devoted to helping each child develop a positive self-image and strengthen feelings of self-worth to maximize their success in society.

The total development and education of the child must be of mutual concern to parents, teachers, superintendents, supervisors, principals, businesses, and the whole greater community. All groups involved in the educational process of children must work in professional unity to prevent the continuing numbers of young people from dropping out of school.

NAESP recognizes the importance of the early years in a child's development. There is sufficient evidence that children can avoid or overcome problems if help is provided during these formative years. However, adequate resources are not available to enable elementary schools to adequately deal with the barriers to learning that prohibit many students from mastering skills necessary for success later on in their academic careers.

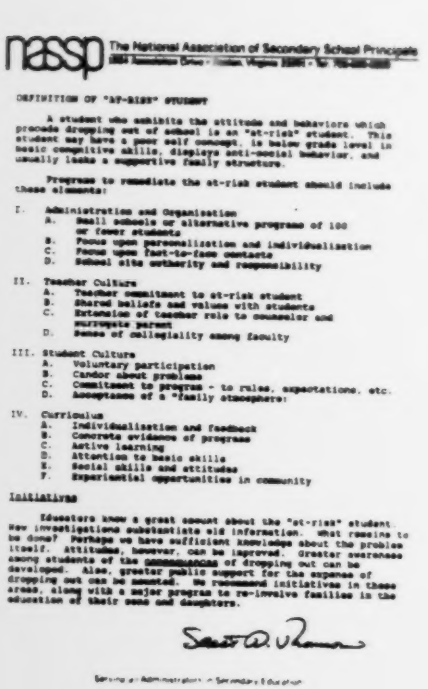
Intervention strategies and programs must be implemented during the early years of learning (pre-K-3) to substantially reduce the number of children who in many cases are predisposed to dropout in high school. Maximum efforts to identify and provide programs for at-risk children must be undertaken based on early production variables such as: parental unemployment; low level of income; one-parent family; large family size; large community size; large school size; lack of preparation of professional personnel in the schools.

Recognizing that the dropout problem extends beyond the individual and the school to society at large, all involved must be committed to cooperatively working toward long-term solutions. The child, the school, the community, businesses, and federal and state policy makers have a vested interest in ensuring the security of our nation's future through committed efforts to prevent youngsters from leaving school before they are adequately prepared to become responsible members of our society.

NAESP believes that the character of a child is significantly influenced by the sum total of experiences and that make media constitute a pervasive influence on children and society and, therefore, have the potential for being a positive educational force. Educators, in cooperation with parents and other concerned citizens, agencies, and associations, should seek to influence the policies and practices followed by the news media toward enlightening the general public of the magnitude of the dropout problem and encouraging children and youth to pursue a sound education.

Samuel G. Sava

1615 Duke Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3483 (703) 684-3345



nassp The National Association of Secondary School Principals

1904 Association Drive • Reston, Virginia 22091 • Tel. 703-860-0200

DEFINITION OF "AT-RISK" STUDENT

A student who exhibits the attitude and behaviors which precede dropping out of school is an "at-risk" student. This student may have a poor self concept, is below grade level in basic cognitive skills, displays anti-social behavior, and usually lacks a supportive family structure.

Programs to remediate the at-risk student should include these elements:

I. Administration and Organization
   A. Small schools or alternative programs of 100 or fewer students
   B. Focus upon personalization and individualization
   C. Focus upon face-to-face contacts
   D. School site authority and responsibility

II. Teacher Culture
   A. Teacher commitment to at-risk student
   B. Shared beliefs and values with students
   C. Extension of teacher role to counselor and surrogate parent
   D. Sense of collegiality among faculty

III. Student Culture
   A. Voluntary participation
   B. Candor about problems
   C. Commitment to program - to rules, expectations, etc.
   D. Acceptance of a "family atmosphere"

IV. Curriculum
   A. Individualization and feedback
   B. Concrete evidence of progress
   C. Active learning
   D. Attention to basic skills
   E. Social skills and attitudes
   F. Experiential opportunities in community

Initiatives

Educators know a great amount about the "at-risk" student. How investigations substantiate old information. What remains to be done? Perhaps we have sufficient knowledge about the problem itself. Attitudes, however, can be improved. Greater awareness among students of the consequences of dropping out can be developed. Also, greater public support for the expense of dropping out can be asserted. We recommend initiatives in these areas, along with a major program to re-involve families in the education of their sons and daughters.

Scott D. Thomson

Executive Administrator for Secondary Education

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NASW

June 2, 1988

The National Association of Social Workers endorses A Blueprint for Business with special emphasis on the following key issues:

1. An integrative approach which brings together school administrators, teachers, and pupil services staff with parents, business leaders, volunteers and appropriate community agencies for interorganizational planning and services. This approach requires training in effective teamwork.

2. A "whole child" perspective which takes into account the complex developmental, familial, cultural and social factors involved in the drop out problem. The school social worker's dual focus on person and environment contributes to a comprehensive approach which capitalizes early intervention.

3. Use of all school staff to make a precise diagnosis leading to a personalized program offering flexible course content and ongoing support services. The aim is to address the student's specific educational, personal, and social problems in a way that optimizes strengths while minimizing deficits.

4. Collaborative planning at the local school level to achieve a disciplined, supportive, dynamic setting. Responds to an caring, respect, personal responsibility and accountability. To this end, the school social worker brings case management skills to facilitating home-school-community collaboration and ensuring linkage of appropriate resources to the student's changing needs.

5. Outreach services to parents and other persons who are important to the student. While family factors are often crucial when students drop out, it is frequently difficult to elicit family involvement in programs. Parental participation is facilitated by home visits and ongoing personal contacts from school social workers who convey respect for changing family patterns and realistic expectations.

6. The school social worker is the center of the educational team whose role has historically focused on intervention with vulnerable students. The National Association of Social Workers will promote the Blueprint among the 140,000 members and lobby for relevant legislation at Federal, State and local levels.

Mark G. Battle, ACSW
Executive Director

National Association of State Boards of Education
701 N. Fairfax St., Suite 340
Alexandria, VA 22314

The following are major NASBE progress which address the principles that Operation Rescue has specified.

Principle 3. The human connection. . . .

- Adolescent Decision-making. Although the primary mission of the public schools is academic, schools can assist in helping adolescents with decision-making skills in areas that affect behavior and life planning. These include alcohol/drug education and family life education. NASBE supports an alcohol education guidelines project.

- Pregnant/parenting and Limited-English proficient students. Appropriate programs for pregnant/parenting adolescents will keep students in school during pregnancy and assure their return after they have given birth. NASBE is beginning a project to test a model of school-based services through school-based clinics for pregnant and parenting youth.

  Research shows that the dropout rate for Hispanics is double the national average. NASBE is currently carrying out a project to create networks in three states so that more integrated vocational services can be provided for limited-English proficient adults.

Principle 4. Training. . . .

- Parent-Child Communication. In order to prevent academic and social problems it is essential for schools to communicate with parents. NASBE has published a pamphlet providing parents with effective strategies for communicating with their children.

These NASBE initiatives in dropout prevention do not fall within the current Operation Rescue format:

- State/local policy for dropout prevention. NASBE supports the active involvement of policymakers at both the local and state levels in providing a policy context that can best address the issues related to dropout prevention. Currently, NASBE is developing a project which will trace the effects of state policy on students at risk in five urban school districts, and in examining programs and policies that are particularly effective at preventing dropout among young women.

Phyllis L. Blumenfeld

nea
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

The National Education Association has made a commitment to solving the dropout problem. That commitment currently has several facets. First, the NEA has changed the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education with development of the Blueprint as a guide for local schools, school districts, and communities throughout the United States to develop their own dropout prevention programs.

Second, NEA is funding a direct grants program of $700,000 through NFIE to make available individual grants of up to $40,000 for up to two years. These grants are available to NEA local affiliates who submit applications developed according to guidelines and in accordance with the principles contained in the Blueprint.

Third, the NEA is committed to restructuring American schools through an agenda for reconstruction based on nine overarching principles. Several of these principles complement and reinforce the principles contained in the Blueprint. The significant principles are as follows:

Students must be active participants in learning. There must be high expectations for student performance, learning reinforcements free from disruptive behavior, and learning activities designed to improve student satisfaction. Students must be involved in questioning and exploration rather than be passive recipients of information.

Full learning opportunity must be available for all. All students must be provided varied and appropriate learning opportunities that will enable them to realize their individual potential, irrespective of economic, social, physical, or psychological condition.

Authority must be vested in the local school faculty where appropriate decisions about teaching and learning are made by those closest to students and the community.

School/community resources must be coordinated to benefit students. Problems not directly related to learning but affecting students' ability to learn must be resolved by school/community collaboration and coordination.

Mary Futrell

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The National PTA

The dropout problem is a national crisis for this complex, multicultural society, and solutions are found in this Blueprint. Primary focus of the seven principles is to educate students as individuals and help them attain productive self-images, set and achieve realistic goals, learn life skills, and be productive in society.

To restructure the system for individualized instruction with competency-based curricula as opposed to "seat" time, current methods of teaching must change.

As advocates for all children, including those initially unsuccessful, National PTA works for the best in their education, health, and welfare. PTA volunteers involved in decision-making at local school, county, and national levels can be instrumental in implementing solutions. PTA monitors and testifies on legislation concerning this problem and continues its collaboration with education groups nationally.

By providing a caring, positive, action-oriented climate for at-risk and dropout students, the home, school, and community can make a difference.

Statement
of
Dr. Thomas A. Shannon
Executive Director
National School Boards Association
for
OPERATION RESCUE
of the
National Education Association
May 19, 1988

The key to reducing the school dropout rate is in the local community. Federal and state fist is helpful only insofar as it inspires people in the local communities to action and supports their endeavors.

In the local community, the school board should provide the leadership for formulating a broadly focused initiative to deal effectively with the root causes of this critical problem. In formulating this action plan for the community, the school board should involve the entire community in recognizing the potentially severe economic and societal implications for the future; identifying the specific problems that lead young people to leave school prematurely; and prescribing comprehensive remedies designed to address the problem. The plan of action that emerges from this process should be practical, tailored closely to community needs and circumstances, and include dimensions such as guidance and counseling, drug education, alternative schools, home-school relations, and values education aimed at enhancing respect for America's traditional "work ethic." The problem is in the local community. And that's where the solution is.

NSBA

U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Blueprint for Success: A Philosophy Statement

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce supports the need for a broadly educated citizenry as being our country's most valuable asset. The Chamber believes that the availability of quality education is essential to the future of our society and our economy. Further, the Chamber supports the historic separation of church and state as a basic tenet of our nation's constitutional system. Likewise, the freedom of education from undue influence by the federal government must underlie only new educational reform initiatives.

Business and education leaders are facing new domestic and international challenges. As a nation, the United States is encountering increasing international competition and shortages of skilled workers. Rapid rates of industrial change caused by automation, robotics, and the widespread use of computers are dramatically altering the composition of the American workforce and the needs of American businesses. At the same time, more than 700,000 young Americans annually drop-out of American high schools. This consumental loss of human resources weakens the free enterprise system, further threatening our international competitiveness.

On February 8, 1984, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Board of Directors endorsed a business-education action plan to stimulate business involvement in state and local education reform initiatives. This plan highlights the need for improved public-private partnerships and cooperation to improve education. The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education's (NFIE) draft report "A Blueprint for Success" is consistent with the principles outlined in the Chamber Plan. By emphasizing public-private collaboration, at the state and local government levels, and stressing the need for students to develop career employment skills, the NFIE report will make a meaningful contribution to the field of drop-out intervention and prevention.

Robert L. Harris
Associate Manager
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

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INDIVIDUAL COLLABORATORS

The Operation Rescue Information Exchanges and **A Blueprint for Success** are the result of great collaboration by individuals and organizations in an extremely tight time frame. The commitment, tenacity, and creativity that all have expressed through their work have been far beyond what any of us could have expected. All took a strong role and collaborated fully with others in a team effort that spanned the United States. The quality and the extent of their work have met and exceeded all expectations. Our special thanks go to each of the following:

- The hosts of the Information Exchanges, their coworkers, and their representatives to the National Information Exchange:
  - —Jan Erskine, President, Denver Classroom Teachers Association, Colorado
  - —Betty McNeil, NEA Western States Regional Office, Colorado
  - —Frances Haywood, NEA Vice President, United Teachers, Los Angeles, California
  - —Ann Yule, United Teachers, Los Angeles, California
  - —Jon Henrikson, President, Kentucky Education Association
  - —Larry Diebold, Executive Director, Kentucky Education Association
  - —Cathy Bodette, UniServ Director, Jefferson County Teachers Association, Kentucky
  - —June Lee, Jefferson County Teachers Association, Kentucky
  - —John Taylor, Murray State University, Kentucky
  - —Jim McAuley, President, Bridgeport Education Association, Connecticut
  - —Ron Jarvella, Bridgeport Education Association, Connecticut

- The twenty program presenters who so diligently cooperated with us in designing their presentations to meet our needs for the blueprint (listed separately)
- The national organizations who have worked with us on the Information Exchanges and the blueprint (listed separately)
- The representatives of the national organizations who attended the Information Exchanges, phrased the questions, and shared the results with us: Frank Burtnett, Earl Geissler, David Jackson (AACD); Earl Ferguson, Rich Miller, Nick Staresinic, (AASA); Dorothy Jenkins, John Porter (ASCA); Nat Semple (CED); David Crandall, Leslie Hergert, Joe Schneider (CEDaR); Cynthia Brown, Alice McDonald (CCSSO); Susan Adler, Kent McGuire, (ECS); Mary Catherine Conroy, Carol Hartman, (JAG); William Kolberg, Andrea Schellman (NAB); Douglas Gawlar, Edna May Merson, Jacqueline Norcel, Michael Wilson (NAESP); Scott Thompson, Les Turner, Allyn Walker (NASSP); Joyce Cunningham, Isadora Hare, Anne Mitchell (NASW); Janice Earle, Tom Howerton, Julia Rankin (NASBE); June Pihl (PTA); Charles Buchanan, Lynne Glassman (NSBA); Bob Martin (USCC)
- The many local practitioners from different agencies and groups who participated in the Information Exchanges: parents, school counselors, principals, school board members, superintendents, police officers, juvenile court representatives, business leaders, cultural council leaders, social workers, education support personnel, staff and volunteers of community service organizations, foundation executives, local government officials, child protection teams, leaders of special programs, and others who came from personal interest.

- National Education Association governance and staff for their trust and their help in so many areas in preparation for the Information Exchanges.
- NEA Communications — in particular, Bob Harman, Stephanie Schoumacher, and Frank Grasso.
- The NFIE Board of Directors, who made this blueprint possible and who attended the Information Exchanges: Terry Herndon (Chair), Don Cameron, Gordon Cawelti, Mary Futrell, Arlene Pavey, Sharon Robinson, and Don Rollie.
- And especially Gloria Frazier and the NFIE/Operation Rescue staff for their parts in designing and implementing Operation Rescue: Sam McMillan, Carolyn Behrman, Julie Seiter, Sharon Dubose, Edith Jefferson, and Larry Billups.

Donna C. Rhodes
Executive Director

PROGRAMS PRESENTED

Jefferson County Open High School
5050 South High 73
Evergreen, CO 80439
303-674-5205

Arnold Langberg,
Principal

The Open High School is a "districtwide (public) school of choice" designed to deal with each student as an important member of the school community. One key component is a supportive environment with a strong advisory program and a system that links each of the 225 students to a staff advocate. The student and his/her adviser are mutally responsible for the development of a schedule combining classroom work, apprenticeship, extended field trips, skills lab work, and/or independent study to fulfill the school's graduation expectations.

School to Work Action Program (SWAP)
Colorado Alliance of Business
600 Grant St., Ste. 204
Denver, CO 80203
303-832-9791

Susan Klein,
Program Manager

The Colorado Alliance of Business, in cooperation with the Denver Public Schools and the Denver business community, designed SWAP to encourage job-age students to complete high school and to assist them in making a successful transition from school to work. Students in Denver's North and West High Schools undertake a core curriculum that includes a Job Development Skills Training course. In coordination with the core curriculum, representatives from the business community volunteer as mentors and guest speakers or donate in-kind services.

The Early Intervention Program
Munroe Elementary School
3440 W. Virginia Ave.
Denver, CO
303-934-5547

Claudia Martinez,
Principal/Program
Director
Dennis Vigil,
Project Manager

At the pilot site for the Denver Public Schools Dropout Prevention Project, Chapter II, Munroe Elementary School identified attendance, academic achievement, attitude and behavior issues, and parent involvement as major areas of concern. In light of these concerns, the program focuses on raising awareness about attendance issues among parents, pupils, and staff. To improve the academic atmosphere, staff development and a pupil tutoring program were instituted. Counseling, home visits, and a series of in-school activities were established to improve pupils' attitudes and behaviors toward learning. A process was developed to strengthen parent-school contacts and increase parent involvement in the educational process.

Student Assistance Program
Cory School
1550 South Steele St.
Denver, CO 80210
303-837-1000 ext. 2469

Robert Matchett,
Program Director

The Student Assistance Program is the support service component for the Denver Public Schools' work to address the issues of substance abuse. It is an early-intervention-and-referral-to-treatment program. It provides the opportunities for a student to remain a part of the school during treatment for his/her identified dysfunction and enables building administrators to select appropriate enforcement procedures that may prevent students from dropping out.

Focus on Youth (Cities in Schools)
1320 W. Third St., Rm. 402
Los Angeles, CA 90017
213-625-6944

Jose C. Colon,
Program Director

Focus on Youth is a public and private partnership in support of the school district's dropout prevention efforts for at-risk students in Los Angeles. The program staff work with a network of counselors who link individual students to appropriate resources in the community according to their specific needs. The program also involves follow-up and tracking once the student has been referred.

Migrant Education, Region 17
Ventura County Superintendent of Schools
535 East Main St.
Ventura, CA 93009
805-652-7324

Joe Mendoza,
Program Director

This Migrant Education Program is a part of a national program created by Congress in 1966. Migrant children receive supplementary basic skills instruction according to their needs as well as supportive health services. Other special needs — including career education, vocational training, English as a second language, bilingual instruction, and enrichment activities — are met as they are identified. Parent involvement is stressed. The program has a computerized Migrant Record Transfer System, which is used to maintain consistency in education as a child moves from school to school.

Dropout Outreach Pilot Project
"Your Invitation to Success"
1320 West Third St., Rm. 842
Los Angeles, CA 90017
213-625-6651

Camilla Kocol,
Program Director

This program is the joint effort of the Los Angeles Unified School District's Division of Adult and Occupational Education and the Senior High School Division. It is designed as a personalized outreach effort that identifies dropouts, contacts them, and encourages them to reenter the educational system at local adult schools, occupational training centers, or skills centers.

Los Angeles Unified School District
Dropout Prevention/Recovery Program
450 North Grand Ave., Rm. A-427
Los Angeles, CA 90012
213-625-6444

Pete Martinez,
Program Director

The Dropout Prevention and Recovery Program is a districtwide comprehensive effort to address the varied needs of at-risk students. The program involves support service advisers and counselors working with students to evaluate and address their individual needs. Options available include: tutoring; open-entry catch-up classes; afternoon, evening, and Saturday classes for students who need to work; and guidance to job training and skills centers.

Summer Training and Education Program (STEP)
555 West Beech St., Ste. 320
San Diego, CA 92101
619-238-1445

Karen Thaxton,
Program Director

STEP is a three-way partnership between the San Diego Private Industry Council, the San Diego Unified School District, and the Regional Youth Employment program. The STEP program was designed by Public/Private Ventures (Philadelphia) as a summer, model demonstration program to improve the performance of 14- and 15-year-olds who are economically disadvantaged and below grade level in reading and mathematics. The program offers students summer employment, basic education, and life planning. Selected students participate over a three-year period and are tracked in a five-year follow-up research effort.

Hart County Public Schools
P.O. Box 68
Munfordville, KY 42765
502-524-2631

Wandel Strange,
Superintendent

The Hart County Public Schools have taken a districtwide approach to the needs of the county's at-risk population. Schools and the community cooperate to offer students a variety of programs including: work experience (JTPA), special education for students having difficulty in classes, counseling support, and cross-grade level activity programs.

L.K.L.P. Head Start Program, Inc.
P.O. Box 650
Whitesburg, KY 41858
606-633-4816

Aleece Jones,
Program Director

L.K.L.P. Head Start is a preschool program designed to make schooling a positive experience for both children and parents. At L.K.L.P. Head Start children ages three to five from largely white, coal mining communities participate in an organized daily schedule of education, socialization, and support services. Parent involvement is stressed, and there is a home visit component to encourage attendance.

The David School
David, KY 41616
606-886-8374

Dan Greene,
School Director

The David School is a small private school in a depressed coal mining area. The school's activities are individualized to help students develop self-confidence through hands-on education. In addition to regular classes, students are offered a choice of imaginative vocational education experiences, including auto shop in a student-run, nonprofit service station. The school operates a preschool or school readiness program as well as adult literacy, remedial education, and GED classes. Four new satellite locations have been established in cooperation with the Mudcreek Clinic and area churches.

Emerson TAPP Teenage Parent Program
1100 Sylvia St.
Louisville, KY 40217
502-454-8245

Georgia Chaffee,
Program Director

TAPP is a school for pregnant girls that draws from the county school system. Students continue with regular classwork while also addressing the issues of personal health care, parenting, and infant care in a supportive atmosphere. Students also have access to medical services.

Jefferson County Night High School
4409 Preston Highway
Louisville, KY 40213
502-456-3173

M. Buell Snyder,
Program Director

The Night High School is a new program designed to help at-risk students meet graduation requirements. The program places an emphasis on the individual student's responsibility for her/his educational success but also focuses its attention on helping students to identify their own specific needs. The program is designed to be flexible, with classes available all day, the day being divided into three blocks of time. Social and support service referral is available.

Regional Youth Substance Abuse Project
205 Middle St.
Bridgeport, CT 06604
203-334-5106

John Higgins-Biddle,
Program Director

The Regional Youth Substance Abuse Project was funded by the United Way as a result of research conducted in 1984-85. The project's goal is to reduce the incidence and prevalence of substance abuse through a program of review and improvement of curriculum in the schools, training of police, a campaign for public awareness, establishment of a hotline and directory of related services, a mini-grants program, and a gathering of youth-servicing agencies to enhance communication on the issues.

Middle College High School
31-11 Thomson Ave.
Long Island City, NY 11106
718-626-8596

Cecilia Cullen,
Principal

Middle College High School, housed on the campus of LaGuardia Community College, is an alternative school for at-risk 11th and 12th graders from West Queens. The program stresses accountability and demands commitment from the students. Classes are held at the college and students have the opportunity to intern in businesses and professional offices in the area.

Center for Interim Education
115 Highland Ave.
Bridgeport, CT 06604
203-576-7890

Carla Corrigan,
Program Director

The Center for Interim Education (CIE) is an alternative school for pregnant teens within the city school system. Classes are structured to follow the material taught in the students' regular classes in order to make reentry to their home schools easier. The program also offers a variety of social and health services and a mandatory parenting course.

Project COFFEE
P.O. Box 476
North Oxford, MA 01537
617-987-1626

Michael Fields,
Program Director

Project COFFEE is a model alternative occupational program linking education, industry, and technology through programs in academic skills, work experience, counseling, and physical fitness. Students from area high schools who are identified as being potential dropouts take classes at the alternative school and get shadow and on-site work experience in the community.

The Boston Compact
Boston Public Schools
26 Court St.
Boston, MA 02108
617-726-6200 ext. 5313

Robert Schwartz,
Program Director

The Boston Compact is an agreement between Boston's private sector and the Boston Public Schools to improve access to jobs for Boston students who improve their performance in school. The goals of the Compact are straightforward: a specified number of private sector summer jobs for graduates, annual measurable improvements in student attendance and dropout reduction, and the adoption of competency-based graduation requirements in basic skills.

SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY

So what's new about dropping out of school today? A few decades ago, when you dropped out of school you dropped into society. Back then, you could get a good job on the farm, in the factory, the market, or the store; you could have a career; you were needed by society. Not so today. Today when you drop from school, you also drop from society. Jobs available to dropouts offer little future. Worse, the choices might be more severe — isolation, alienation, dependency on welfare; or worse yet, delinquency, crime, and incarceration. You lose as a person and so does society. Clearly, dropping out of school today hurts all of us — the dropouts and the rest of us as well.

If we are to solve today's dropout problem, we need to see it as an opportunity. It is an opportunity for us to better understand what causes growing numbers of children and youth to drop from or be pushed out of school. All of us — educators, business and labor leaders, civic and public officials, social services persons, community leaders, parents, and citizens at large — need to know better and more precisely what are the various causes that generate dropouts and pushouts. We need that knowledge to inform us how we can address these causes. But we also need the "will"— individually and collectively — to put into place ways and means to eliminate these causes, wherever and however they exist. This "will" must be strong and courageous, for the solutions will require us to change in and out of schools. In short, we—the whole of our communities — need to have an "informed will" if we are truly to start helping these youngsters, and, in turn, help ourselves to a future that better assures a more just, caring, and productive family of Americans. And we can start with our schools.

Would it not be ironic that these young people — those who so desperately need our attention, our support, our skills, and our knowledge — were the cause for the reform of American schools? Not a "trickle down," but a "double up" — from them to us, so to speak. What an opportunity they offer us. Let us seize it. Let us get on with making the American school the caring and educating place it ought to be.

Edward J. Meade, Jr.
Chief Program Officer
The Ford Foundation

A CALL TO ACTION

What can we do to help keep students in school? What goes wrong to make a student want to drop out? What do we need to do differently to help prevent dropouts in the future? These are the sorts of questions teachers are asking in schools in every part of America — in poverty-stricken urban schools, in isolated rural schools, even in the most successful suburban schools. And these are the questions that I believe all Americans must ask—because the dropout problem is a problem for our entire nation.

The story of America's dropout tragedy is more than a statistical story. It is a human story. It's the statistical collection of these human stories that has drawn national attention. But it's the individual stories — the specific children who lose their American birthright to achieve the American Dream — that frighten America's school employees.

We fear that young people who drop out will become a new permanent underclass within our nation. We fear that they will occupy the lowest tier in a multi-tiered society, in a society once again polarized between the privileged and the deprived. We fear that they will become the core of a forsaken population that is estranged from the American mainstream, exiled from the American Dream, alienated from inalienable rights. We fear, in short, that the dropout tragedy will bring our country's long march toward justice to a sad and senseless deadend.

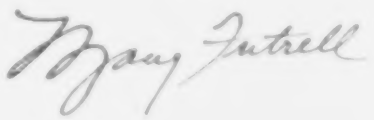
Our economic well-being demands an immediate full-scale assault on the dropout problem. Morality demands the same. If just one child were being lost in the dropout crisis, that would be one too many. But when we lose 25 to 30 percent of our youth, what we have is a national disgrace.

But where do we begin the solution?

We created Operation Rescue because we believe that the dropout problem, though national in scope, will be solved in our neighborhoods and in our communities. Neighbors helping neighbors: that's an ideal as old as America itself. And it's an ideal we must now reclaim and put back to work. For the children's sake. For America's sake.

NEA's Operation Rescue won't end dropouts. But it will, we hope, help end apathy about the dropout problem. Our Operation Rescue will, we hope, help communities discover dropout prevention programs and approaches that really work, programs and approaches that can serve as models to communities across the United States.

This much needed campaign is now taking shape, taking shape under the auspices of the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education. I can think of no better organization in whose hands we in NEA could have placed responsibility for Operation Rescue.



Mary Hatwood Futrell
President
National Education Association

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